

Dear AIB 2009 Competitive Session Chair:

Thank you very much for agreeing to act as the chair for one of the 200 sessions at the upcoming 2009 AIB meeting in June.

We are grateful that you are joining the giant network of volunteers needed to make this conference happen. The purpose of this message is to forward suggestions on how to chair a session, drawing upon the advice of former AIB program chairs.

Let me quote Nakiye Boyacigiller:

"The greatest responsibility lies with the session chairs, who can 'make or break' a session through his/her ability (or inability) to skillfully manage the time, presenters, topic and audience. The chair is like a conductor of a symphony; a good conductor can make beautiful music, even when the piece is difficult or the players less experienced. Your role is to be that good conductor."

This is especially important as since the 2006 Beijing conference, the roles of chairs and discussants have been consolidated into the session chair. While you aren't expected to act as a discussant in the sessions, we would appreciate it if you can help to initiate a discussion following each presentation. Here you can raise common themes that cut across the individual presentations in order to stimulate the discussion among participants.

1. GET ACQUAINTED AHEAD OF TIME WITH THE PEOPLE ON YOUR SESSION

As session chair, you are expected to contact everyone on your session ahead of time – a good time to do this would be TODAY. The simplest way to determine who is on your session is to check the AIB Program on the AIB 2009 website at: <http://aib.msu.edu/events/2009/programdetail.htm>. *Please check the time of your session and make sure you have it penciled in your agenda.*

Please download the information for your session (you can COPY and PASTE the text into MS WORD) so that you can refer to it if necessary. You can download manuscripts by using the manuscripts' ID numbers which are written in parentheses in the detailed program. To download go to the website at <http://aib.msu.edu/events/2009/GetManuscript.asp>

2. CIRCULATING THE PAPERS AHEAD OF TIME

Please encourage everyone on your session to read the papers ahead of time, at the very latest, on the flight to San Diego. This way, each person can attempt in their presentation to link their papers to the other presentations making for a more cohesive and stimulating session.

I am sending out separate guidelines to the authors for all the sessions, but feel free to email any more specific instructions as the sessions do differ in length, numbers of participants, purpose and content.

3. BRINGING PAPERS TO THE SESSION

Each paper presenter should bring 30-40 copies of a summary of his/her paper to the session as a handout. Not the paper; just a summary. The handout should be no more than 2-3 pages in length, double-sided with two pages to a side (that is, four pages onto one sheet of paper). No one wants to carry dozens of papers with them when they return home, but having a 2-3 page summary during the session can be very helpful to the audience in terms of understanding the paper.

The handout should present the key points of the paper. This might be the slides if the presenter is using PowerPoint or overheads, or the Abstract, Hypotheses and Tables of Results. The paper title, author(s) and their addresses should be at the top, along with the session date and time.

These handouts should be distributed by you the chair and/or the authors before the session starts, with the extras left at the entry doors so that people coming in to the sessions can pick up the papers. Any leftover handouts, once the session is over, should be collected by the session chair (yourself) and returned to the AIB Registration Desk. We will have a table at the exhibit hall where people can browse through leftover summaries, if they missed the session.

4. ORDER OF PRESENTERS

Unless there is a problem, please keep to the order of papers, as outlined in the Final Program distributed at the conference. We would prefer that people don't "hop" from one session to another, to listen to a particular paper, based on the order shown in the program, but in reality we are unlikely to eliminate this practice. However, we are asking that each presenter remains in the session in which they're scheduled throughout that session, in courtesy to the other speakers, and again to ensure a more coherent session.

5. HOW TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE THE SESSION TIME

All sessions are one hour and fifteen minutes (75 minutes) long. Many competitive sessions have 4 papers. That would be 15 minutes for each paper and 15 minutes for audience discussion. Again, since there are no separate discussants, it is important that you give the audience sufficient time to comment. Therefore, for competitive sessions a good general rule of thumb is:

- Four papers: 15 minutes per paper
- Three papers: 20 minutes per paper

Timing will be tight. Therefore, please do enforce the time limits we have proposed. That is, do not let a speaker run on and take time away from the speakers that follow, or from the feedback that they themselves will receive. Please do not put your speakers in the untenable situation in which the time for the session is up and others need the room, but your session hasn't yet been completed (you will be asked to leave the room at that point!) – watch the clock to see that everyone gets their fair share of the time, and the session can be concluded in good order.

Carry a small clock or stopwatch with you and two or three single sheets of paper. You can flag up when speakers have 5 minutes left, when they have 2 minutes left, and when their time is up. Tell the speakers ahead of time to watch for these sheets, and that we absolutely expect them to stop when the STOP sign is held up.

When in doubt about the time, tend to err in favor of Q&A from the audience.

Finally, if you notice a presenter becoming highly defensive in response to comments they receive, please try to interfere and move the discussion to another direction. These defensive stances add little to the discussion, and they merely reduce the time available for further feedback to the authors, which is the whole purpose of these sessions. If they wish to continue the discussion, invite them to do so informally later after the close of the session, and during one of the breaks.

6. HOW TO START A SESSION

As chair, it is up to you to start the session. The first thing is to start on time. This is often hard to do, especially first thing in the morning when people can straggle in, but it is important to start on time, even if others join the session late. The second thing is to simply introduce the topic and the speakers. Your whole introduction should take no more than 2 minutes.

7. AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT

Computers and computer projectors will be available in all rooms. Therefore, authors need to bring their presentations in the form of a PowerPoint document on a USB Memory Stick. Authors have been told to divide the number of minutes they have by two to work out how many slides they can manage in the time available (so no more than 7 or 8 slides). We have advised them of this, but it wouldn't hurt if you were to remind them.

8. OTHER SUGGESTIONS

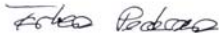
Meet the participants of your session 10 minutes BEFORE the session starts so that everyone can be introduced, the equipment can be checked, handouts can be distributed, and most importantly of all: so that presentations can be uploaded on to the computer in the room ahead of the start of the session, to avoid having to do this in the time of the session itself. You may wish to also use this time to remind them of the time limits they have, and what your role will be in maintaining order in the session.

It also helps to give your session members your room number in the hotel or a mobile telephone number where you can be reached should an emergency occur. If that unwelcome emergency does occur please let your session members know as soon as possible, and make other plans. Please be prepared for the unexpected!

Please see specific suggestions for session chairs in the [Appendix](#) that follows and has been adapted for AIB use. The [Appendix](#) was originally presented at a workshop on improving the effectiveness of AOM sessions at The Academy of Management 1999 conference.

I look forward to seeing you all in San Diego!

Best regards



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AIB 2009 Program Chair

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APPENDIX – The Role of the Session Chair

* Abstracted with permission from “Making AOM Sessions Exciting!” by Jing Zhou (Texas A&M) and Russ Coff (Emory). The report was based on an AOM workshop, August 8, 1999, Chicago, IL, where the panel members were the two co-authors of the report, Sally Blount-Lyon (Chicago), Michael H. Lubatkin (Connecticut), Karl Weick (Michigan) and Edward J. Zajac (Northwestern).

Session Chair: Chairs must balance the needs of presenters (wishing time to get their ideas across) and the audience to design and execute an interesting session. This goes well beyond being a mere timekeeper.

Chairs are not just timekeepers. How can they organize and facilitate sessions to bring out audience participation?

IN PREPARATION FOR THE SESSION:

- Create expectations for how the session will be run. Do not try to establish these in the session once authors have developed their presentations.
- Make sure everyone gets copies of the papers (authors should also get copies of other papers if possible to promote a panel discussion).
- Get slides from the presenters and serve as a mentor to inexperienced authors. This is an opportunity to alert the author that the presentation is too long before he/she is in front of an audience.

DURING THE SESSION:

- DO NOT give the standard boilerplate about time, and take up too much time doing it. Tell the presenters the “rules” before the session.
- DO start out with a few words about the subject matter of the session and how each paper will contribute toward exploring that research domain.
- Session chairs must shut down inexperienced or unprepared presenters who do not conform to the prescribed time limits.
- Create an informal “first-name” atmosphere in the session to encourage discussion.